



Agenda Report

April 23, 2018

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Public Safety Committee (April 18, 2018)

FROM: Departments of Public Works

**SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF COLORADO BRIDGE TASK FORCE
RECOMMENDATION TO DETER SUICIDE ATTEMPTS ON THE
COLORADO STREET BRIDGE**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Direct staff to further study the recommendations of the Colorado Street Bridge Task Force, and return to Council with a recommended project and appropriate environmental review; and
2. Approve the suicide prevention measures recommended by the Colorado Bridge Task Force to deter suicide attempts on the Colorado Street Bridge.

BACKGROUND:

In response to recent suicides and suicide attempts from the Colorado Street Bridge, the City installed metal mesh fencing in July 2017 as a partial temporary deterrent measure until a more permanent solution is identified and implemented. Ten-foot tall fencing was installed along both sides of the bridge at all 20 benched alcoves to prevent entry to locations that provide the easiest access over the existing vertical barrier. Wrought iron fencing was also added at all four corners of the bridge to deter easy access to the outside ledge of the bridge.

On July 19, 2017, City Staff provided the City's Public Safety Committee a presentation regarding the Colorado Bridge; its history relative to suicides, statistics and literature on the subject, how other communities have dealt with similar issues, and several sample treatments or deterrents.

Subsequently, in August 2017, the City's Public Works Director assembled a Colorado Bridge Task Force composed of community members and prominent experts in the fields of historic preservation, suicide prevention, architecture, engineering, public

developing a responsibly designed permanent solution that is amenable to all stakeholders and the community at large. The Mission of the Task Force is to engage the community in developing solutions that will deter people from attempting suicide at the bridge while also preserving the structure's national historic status and architectural significance. And, the Task Force Vision is to allow the community to experience and enjoy the Colorado Street Bridge and the Arroyo as a safe and beautiful environment now and in the future.

The Colorado Bridge Task Force held two community meetings. The first community meeting was held on November 29, 2017 to provide background information and gather ideas from the public regarding solutions that may help deter suicide attempts from the bridge. Over 90 community members were in attendance, including families of suicide victims and mental health professionals. Below is a categorized summary of ideas and suicide deterrent measures presented by the public and evaluated by the Task Force:

1. Physical Measures: Vertical barrier improvements; end treatments; ledge modifications.
2. Self-Help Measures: Signs; phone lines; text lines.
3. Active Measures: Speakers/Intercom; volunteer patrols; cameras; motions sensors.
4. Post-Attempt Measures: Horizontal barriers (netting); planting trees below.
5. Changes to Environmental Conditions: Lighting; planting hedges below.

The second community meeting was held on February 20, 2018 to present evaluation of the ideas offered by the public and solicit community's feedback. Over 80 community members were in attendance. Pros and cons of each deterrent measure were presented and vetted with the public based on the following key factors:

- Physically Prevent Attempt
- Expected Effectiveness
- Aesthetics
- Environmental Impact
- Effect on Emergency Services
- Full Implementation Timeframe

Based on the evaluation of all proposed deterrent measures and the feedback received from the community outreach process, the Task Force reached the following conclusions:

- Vertical barriers and end treatments are the only deterrent measure that physically prevent attempts from occurring.
- Literature from various studies suggest vertical barriers to be most effective in suicide reduction, showing the highest prevention rates, between 80% and 100% depending on design variables.
- Vertical barriers would significantly reduce strain on first responders.
- As a passive measure, vertical barriers do not require human oversight or intervention to mitigate an attempt.

- Vertical barriers would require primarily a single, up-front installation cost and minimal on-going costs, and will become effective immediately upon implementation.
- Planting of trees below the bridge to 'cushion' the landing or otherwise discourage jumping attempts has a weaker effectiveness; no verifying scientific data was found. Planting of trees is not possible along approximately 20% of the bridge's span, including at the bridge's highest point over the concrete channel. Although ranked high on 'aesthetics' factor, this measure ranked low on "full implementation timeframe" given long-time maturity of trees.
- Along with other measures, planting of trees below the bridge may be implemented as a supplemental deterrent measure subsequent to or alongside the primary deterrent measure of enhancing the vertical barriers of the bridge.
- In the near-term, the "There is Hope" suicide deterrent signs on each end of the bridge need updating, to incorporate a more widely used helpline number and add a new crisis text line introduced by the City's Public Health Department. Staff has initiated this effort.

As such, the Colorado Bridge Task Force recommends the following primary suicide deterrent measures to City Council for further study and design:

1. Design and installation of vertical barriers on both sides of the bridge for its entire length, including the existing weak points along the benched alcoves. Vertical barriers shall have a minimum height of 7'-6" above highest toe-hold in order to deter attempts effectively.
2. Design and installation of end treatments on both ends of the bridge to deter a person's ability to easily access and walk along the outside ledge of the bridge.
3. Subsequent complementary measures that will work in concert with the primary measures noted above, and may be implemented as a future phase of the project should need arise.

Upon Council approval of the Task Force recommendations, City staff will create a new Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project and seek funding appropriation for the Environmental and Design Phase of the project as part of the adoption of the Fiscal Year 2019 CIP Budget.

The Environmental and Design Phase of the CIP project will entail the following key tasks:

- Generation and advertisement of a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit design proposals and select a design consulting team;
- Development and engineering of a vertical barrier design;
- Preparation of required environmental documents and acquisition of environmental clearances;
- Public outreach at critical milestones to ensure close collaboration with the community and key stakeholders of the bridge.

- Recommendations from applicable Commissions, including Historic Preservation Commission
- Preparation of plans, specifications and estimate (PS&E)

Staff anticipates beginning the Environmental and Design Phase of the project in July 2018, immediately following approval of the project as part of Council's adoption of the Fiscal Year 2019 CIP Budget.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

This project is consistent with the City Council's goals to improve, maintain and enhance public facilities and infrastructure, support and promote the quality of life and local economy, and ensure public safety.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The action proposed herein is to further study of the Task Force recommendations, and does not commit the City to any particular project. After further study, and prior to committing to a particular project, staff will conduct the appropriate environmental review.

FISCAL IMPACT:

A capital project will be created for the Environmental and Design Phase of the project as part of Council's adoption of Fiscal Year 2019 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget. Staff estimates the Environmental and Design Phase of the project to cost \$400,000.

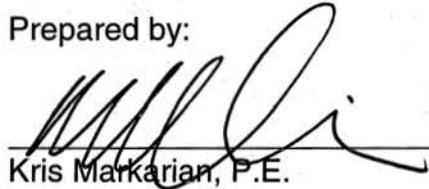
Construction cost of this project will vary based on the development of the barrier design and any implementation of environmental mitigation measures. At this time, staff anticipates construction costs to be in the \$1.5 to \$2 million range. Upon completion of the Environmental and Design Phase of the project, staff will return to Council for appropriation of funding for construction of the project.

Respectfully submitted,



ARA MALOYAN, P.E.
Director of Public Works

Prepared by:



Kris Markarian, P.E.
City Engineer

Approved by:



STEVE MERMELL
City Manager